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But God

By

A. B. Simpson.



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BUT GOD

The Resources and Sufficiency of God.

BY

REV. A. B. SIMPSON

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PREFACE.

THE subject of this little book is the greatest in the world. "I have lost everything," said a sorrowing woman to us once, "everything but God," and that one phrase seemed to loom like a whole heaven and eclipse all that she had lost, for if she had God she had lost nothing and had gained everything.

The greatest need of our age and of every age, the greatest need of every human heart, is to know the resources and sufficiency of God.

How the apostle paints it like a rainbow across a black and stormy sky as after describing the lost and helpless condition of sinful men, dead in trespasses and sin, children of wrath, subjects of the prince of the powers of the air, he suddenly pauses and utters the two words, "But God"—"who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

How the same apostle again gives us the key to the true life of holiness in his

short but striking antithesis, "Not I—but Christ who liveth in me."

How the words stand out as the key to God's providence as we read the story of Peter's imprisonment and his approaching doom, as Herod waited on the morrow to bring him forth to execution, and then follows that simple, significant sentence, "But prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him." And that little "but" was mightier than Herod's wrath or the Pharisee's hate, or the bars and bolts of the prison.

And how awfully and solemnly the same words loom up again in the parable of the fool who had staked all on this world's wealth and fortune and who had consulted everybody else about his pleasures and his plans until suddenly, like the cold gates of death and judgment we come against the terrible sentence, "But God said, thou fool."

The pages that follow are an attempt to unfold the all-sufficiency and infinite variety of the resources of God.

THE GOD OF ELIJAH.

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" (II Kings ii. 14).

ALWAYS have I been glad that Elisha did not say, "Where is Elijah?" He had lost his friend and spiritual father, and if ever a sense of bereavement could have been justified it would have been in the case of Elisha. But his only thought is of the Master and not of the servant. Back of all Elijah's marvelous life and work he only sees the infinite resources of that God that could be as much to him as He had been to his master, and the deep cry of his soul is not for mere human sympathy, but for the manifestation of God's supernatural power and presence. The deep need of Elisha's life was the same deep need that every earnest soul feels to-day—the revelation of God, the realization of the supernatural.

Elisha was thinking of all that God had been to Elijah, and longing that He might be the same to him. Oh, that our hearts might have the same longing to know the God of Elijah, the God of Elisha!

THE GOD OF ELIJAH.

How much Jehovah had been to the servant whom He had just translated into His glorious presence! Suddenly called from the solitudes of Gilead, this strange, lonely man, whose life and character had been moulded amid the majesty of nature, alone with his God, was immediately projected into the very midst of an age of unparalleled wickedness and a scene of godless culture and luxury. The beautiful capital of the kingdom of Israel was under the dominion of the wicked and worthless Ahab, whose conduct and sceptre were wholly under the control of that infamous woman whose name has ever since stood as the symbol of every kind of evil—Jezebel, the Sidonian idolatress.

Single-handed, the prophet of Gilead was called upon to fight the combined forces of a wicked court, a mercenary and idolatrous priesthood, and a whole people turned from the way of godliness and sunk either in sin or heartless apathy. The situation would have been a desperate one but for the resources of God, and it was fitted to call forth the sublimest faith and to manifest the most extraordinary displays of the supernatural power of God. With a faith that never faltered but once, the mighty prophet met the emergency and claimed the fulness of his divine equipment. At his word the heavens were sealed and the harvest withered, and at the same word the treasures of rain were opened and the earth gave forth her fruit. The ravens of the wilderness ministered unto him, and the widow's little store of meal and oil was multiplied until the months of famine had gone.

At last all Israel was gathered at his command for a mighty convocation on

Mount Carmel, and there he stood alone to vindicate the name of Jehovah against the wicked Jezebel, the angry Ahab, the eight hundred prophets of Baal and the myriads of Israel. The altar was prepared, the trenches dug and filled with water, the vain attempts of the heathen prophets repeated again and again and only meeting with ignominious failure, then the final, momentous test was uttered and the power of Omnipotence summoned to send the heavenly fire. Quick as the lightning flash it fell, devouring the sacrifices, licking up the floods that filled the trenches and blazing before the wondering gaze of the assembled myriads until their intense emotion could hold back no longer, and thundering from that mighty court the shout went up, echoing from Carmel's rocky vales, "The Lord, He is the God. The Lord, He is the God."

Swiftly the victory was followed to its awful finish. The prophets of Baal were slain before the reaction had time to

come, and then, bending in agonized prayer before his God, the prophet claimed, as the climax of the whole wondrous scene, the opening heavens and the descending rain, and then, girding his loins like some great leader, in mighty triumph he ran before the chariot of Ahab to the entrance of the palace gates, while the torrents fell and the nation rejoiced that at length the judgment was passed, and the heart of the people turned back again.

But even greater than this was the revelation of Jehovah's power in the life of Elijah. To him it was permitted, before any other messenger of Jehovah, to burst open the very gates of death itself and summon back the departed spirits from the unseen world, and then, when his work was done, a yet higher triumph awaited him, for he himself was raised even beyond the touch of death and borne to the heavenly world with horses and chariots of fire.

The Lord God of Elijah was the God

of life and death, the God of earth and heaven, the God of nations and princes and kings, the God of nature and grace, the God of judgment and retribution, the God who is a consuming fire, mightier than all the forces of nature, of man, of earth or hell. This is the mighty God whose working Elisha had witnessed in the life of his master and whose presence he claims as he goes forth to prove His infinite resources in a life yet more wonderful than even his master's had been.

THE GOD OF ELISHA.

For Elisha's was a larger life than even Elijah's. While the prophet of fire was a more startling figure and perhaps reached at times a higher flight than his successor, yet Elisha's sphere took a broader sweep and reached a plane nearer to humanity at large and more helpful to the ordinary man and woman. A careful study of the life of this marvelous prophet through the fifty years of his public ministry, will, we are sure, im-

press every one who follows the panorama of his work with the infinite resources of God and the practical reality of His presence and help in every situation and time of need. We would suggest to our readers to take a single week and read every day a chapter for seven successive days, commencing with the second chapter of II. Kings, reading to the seventh, and then concluding on the seventh day with the thirteenth chapter, which gives the last scenes in his closing life. Such a review will bring God nearer to our conceptions, and awaken in us the intense desire for such a life and walk with Him, and often prompt the cry and prayer, Where is the Lord God of Elisha? Let us glance at some of these representative scenes.

1. Looking back to the last days of Elijah and the transition of his ministry to his successor, we are struck, as the very first illustration of God's resources, with the wonderful way in which Jehovah shows His ability to choose His

agents and supply the worker that He most needs at every emergency and crisis in the history of His kingdom. Elijah had just failed and fled from Jezebel in the supreme moment of his triumph. Too elated, perhaps, the reaction had come before he was prepared to withstand it, and so that humiliating chapter is written in the story of his life, "So he arose and went for his life."

But how tenderly God dealt with him! He let him run till he was thoroughly tired out, and then He let him rest under the juniper tree, and awoke him again and again and again, and ministered to his hunger and weariness, until the tired prophet was rested and refreshed; and then God sent him to Horeb that He might give him His last commissions. One of these commissions was a release from the work of which for a moment he allowed himself to grow tired, and with it the appointment of those that were to succeed him. "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus," was the

Lord's message, "And when thou goest anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu, the son of Nimshi, shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha, the son of Shaphat, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room." How swiftly he was excused! How soon his successor was elected! How easy it is for God to go through the court of a sinful kingdom or to the farm and field where some humble Elisha is following the oxen and the plough, and call for the instrument He needs just at the moment He requires him. Oh, how humbling it is to our self-importance and pride! God does not need any voice, and it is just an honor and a privilege that He lets us serve Him. Let us be very careful how we get tired too soon or ask to be relieved. God may take us at our word, and He has plenty of others to fill our room.

2. We have another illustration in I. Kings xxii. 34, of how easy it is for God to pick out an instrument, even an unconscious instrument, for His work and

plan. Long before he had decreed and announced the punishment of Ahab for his crimes, and His longsuffering had waited and spared the wicked king again and again. At last the judgment came, but the means were most solemn in their simplicity. Ahab was just returning from the battle field where he had escaped the assaults of the foe, and was securely riding in his chariot as he supposed away from harm and danger, but "a certain man drew a bow at a venture," and the arrow sped from the string, the sender neither knowing nor caring whither, but at that very moment by a slight movement the joints of Ahab's coat of mail were opened at the very spot which that arrow struck, and lo, it entered and pierced him to the heart, and he cried, "Carry me from the battle for I am wounded." As the sun sank in the west his life ebbed away and the judgment long threatened was at last fulfilled. How easy it is for God to strike His foes. How little we need to worry and trouble

ourselves about our enemies! "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

A blatant infidel, it is said, was once returning with a party of friends from the market place of a village in England, where he had just defied God, if there was a God, to strike him dead; and as no harm had come to him his godless companions were profanely exulting and glorying in their shame. They were riding along a country road when suddenly their leader fell from his horse in convulsions and as they gathered around him they found he was gasping for breath and in a few moments was dead. No apparent cause could be assigned. Therefore a post-mortem examination was held, and it was found that a little insect, a sand fly, the smallest creature almost that God has created, had been sent by Him as the executioner of the judgment he brought upon himself. This little creature had penetrated his windpipe and

choked him to death. God would not condescend to strike him for his impudent infidelity with His own direct hand, but sent that most insignificant creature in the world to show at once His omnipotence and His contempt. This is the God of Elisha. This is our God. Let us trust Him. Let us fear Him. Let us commit the keeping of our souls unto Him as unto a faithful Creator.

3. The God of Elisha is the God that can remove the most formidable difficulties from our pathway. The moment Elisha had received the promised power of the Spirit of God, he found himself met, not by bands of welcoming angels, but by the swelling tide of the angry Jordan that refused to allow him to pass over to the field of his future ministry, where the critical young students of Bethel were watching to see what kind of a prophet he was. But with a single cry, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" he smote the waters and called upon the same almighty resources, and lo, the floods di-

vided and the angry torrent became an escort to open the way to the farther side; and as he marched across in triumph, lo, the critical students, awed and humbled, were bowing at his feet and humbly saying, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha."

Beloved, the very first thing that you and I will meet when we take some new hold of God for power and blessing will probably be a swollen Jordan, an overwhelming obstacle. What are you going to do about it? There is nothing you can do but remember what God can do and turn at once from your strength and weakness, from your doubts and difficulties, and take Him for your all-sufficiency and your cry will be, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before the God of Elisha (or Zerubbabel) thou shalt become a plain" (Zech. iv. 7).

4. The God of Elisha is able to control the forces of nature. In II. Kings ii. 20, and iv. 42, we have two fine examples of the power of God through His servant

Elisha in the natural world. The first was the healing of barren soil by the sprinkling upon it of some salt. And the second was the multiplying of the bread by which the wants of a hundred men were satisfied from twenty little buns, even as in later ages on the Galilean shore the five thousand were fed by the Master's miracle.

And so still we have a God who can help us in the farm, in the kitchen, who can fertilize our field, protect our crops, send our harvest, give us our daily bread, multiply the little which the house wife has until it becomes an ample store for her little family circle. So God is walking to-day with many an humble saint in the lowly place of toil and trial, and so let us trust Him.

5. The God of Elisha is a God of emergencies. The third chapter of II. Kings tells us the story of the water famine in the valley of Eden, and the wonderful deliverance which came through Elisha. "Thus saith the Lord," was the prophet's

answer to the unbelief of Jehoram and the fears of Jehoshaphat, "Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain, yet that valley shall be filled with water that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle and your beast. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord. He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand." The God of Elisha can send water when there is neither wind nor rain nor any outward sign. He can give us help when all human help fails. He can give us help when, like Jehoshaphat, we are even in a place we should not be, and it is but a light thing for Him to do the greatest thing for those who trust Him. His resources are so superabounding that we never can exhaust them, and what He does for us is but a loving provocation for us to ask Him to do yet more.

6. The God of Elisha is the God of grace as well as of temporal blessing. The fourth chapter of II. Kings gives the incident of the widow's oil, and the wonderful deliverance it wrought for her as she

poured it into the empty vessels and it multiplied and grew until it became a fortune, enough to pay her debt and keep her all her days. The oil, we know, was the symbol of the Holy Ghost, and the deep lesson is, that if we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our houses, He will become the source of every needed supply and the guarantee of every possible blessing.

All we need is to use what we have and to take the trials and needs that come to us as empty vessels into which He will pour His fulness and transform every difficulty into an occasion of blessing and praise.

7. The God of Elisha is the God of health and healing. There is no finer example of God's provision for our physical diseases than the story of Naaman and his healing in the waters of Jordan. It was not Elisha that healed him, for he refused even to touch him. It was simply the power of God coming to the suffering one the moment he trusted and obeyed,

and his washing in the Jordan was but the consummated act of faith that met God exactly on His Word, and persevered in the attitude of faith until the blessing fully came. The same God still waits to heal all that come to Him in the same patient, persistent and overcoming faith.

8. The God of Elisha is the God of the supernatural. The incident of the sixth chapter of II. Kings is a fine illustration of the principle of the supernatural. Going down with his college boys to build the log college on the banks of the Jordan, one of the students lost his axe-head in the water, and the prophet met the emergency by commanding the iron to swim, thus showing that the power of God is superior even to the laws of nature. This is just what the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ proves and makes practicable for us also. We have still the God who can rise above even His own laws when the interests of His children require it, and who is "Head over all

things for the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

Where is the Lord God of Elijah and Elisha? He is wherever His people's need requires the manifestations of His presence and His power. He is in the darkest times and the most sinful age still what He was in the age of Jezebel and Ahab. He is the God not of a few exclusive people and transcendent circumstances, but He is the God who, as in the case of Elisha, will meet us in the palace, on the Mount Carmel, or in the battle, at the plough, or with the widow in her little cottage, anywhere and every where that need can claim and faith can trust Him.

Elisha was a man of the people and his life was just lived to teach us that our Christ is the Christ of the common people still, and His promise and His grace are for every situation and every suffering child. He is where faith can trust Him, prayer can wait for Him, and patience can hold fast till He come. This

God is our God, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and like Him "the same yesterday, to-day and forever." Lord, help us to understand Thee better and to trust Thee more.

THE GOD OF PAUL.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19).

THIS is Paul's legacy to his disciples and friends. He bequeaths to us his God and with Him all his own life and experience has revealed of His infinite all-sufficiency. This wonderful phrase begins with "God" and ends with "Christ Jesus," and between these two extremes lie, first "all your need," and secondly, "His riches in glory." It is not only a banknote, but it is a whole bank with all the resources of the proprietor behind it.

The greatest need of Christian life is to know God and His resources. Now the Bible is just a revelation of the all-sufficiency of God through the human channels and instruments that He has used to reveal Him. The typical lives and

characters of the Holy Scriptures are not so much remarkable for themselves as for the divine Presence that stands back of each of them. The difference between human heroes and sacred characters lies just in this: the man is just a man; and behind the man of God, God Himself is ever standing greater than the man and overshadowing him by His infinite and glorious Presence.

The latest and one of the greatest of our national heroes is about to return to his grateful country to be crowned with the honors of a successful war. Behind him there stands, of course, the valuable realm that he has conquered for us and the glorious flag which he represents. But that is all. And he himself is for the time the supreme personality that absorbs the public eye and heart. But behind Enoch is Enoch's God. Behind Elijah is Elijah's God. Behind Moses is a Presence far mightier than Moses. Behind Paul is the marvelous Presence that his life reveals and that his last will and testa-

ment bequeaths to every Christian heart. Standing on the threshold of his new life, and just awaking from the startling farewell of his glorified master, Elisha faces the frowning Jordan and the mighty tasks of his divine ministry, but we are so glad that he did not ask for Elijah. He asked for Elijah's God.

And so Paul, separated from his beloved Philippian friends, does not try to comfort them with the mere promise of his earthly presence, for he knew that even that could be but temporary, but he gives them his God. Compressing into a single sentence all the meaning of his own experience and of God's infinite riches he says, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Each of these representative lives reveals God in some new light, and so Paul's God stands before us in a light as distinctive and quite as glorious as Elisha's or Elijah's. What are the lessons the life of Paul teaches us about the all-

sufficiency of God? We have often looked at Paul, now let us look at Paul's wonderful God.

1. The God of Paul was a God that can save the greatest sinner and reach the hardest case of unbelief, for Paul presents himself to us as the pattern sinner. With deepest humility, and yet utmost self-unconsciousness, he tells us not how deserving he was, but how unworthy. He counts himself the pattern sinner set forth on purpose to show that God can save anybody since He saved him. "For this cause," he says, "I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." After Paul, anybody.

The peculiarity of Paul's case, that made it especially difficult, was that Paul was not so much a bad sinner as a good one. He was a moral man, a righteous man, a blameless man, a conscientious man, a religious man, a most earnest

worker for the religious cause that he believed. There was no loose joint in his harness, where the arrow of conviction could enter. He had lived "in all good conscience before God," unto the day of his conversion. Such a man is very difficult to reach. Our appeals roll off like water. God's severest warnings found no lodging place in his armor-plated soul.

We have all had some experience with such cases and yet one flash of Christ's revealing light, one glimpse of His suffering face and pitying love broke this hard and wilful soul to pieces and sent him forth to live under the constraining power of grateful love. Beloved, are you praying for some hard case, some godless, hardened soul? Remember the God that saved Paul and pray and not faint.

2. The God of Paul is able to raise us to the highest saintliness, for Paul is not only a pattern sinner, but he is also a pattern saint. He dares to say, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and heard and seen in me, do." But the pri-

mary feature of his saintliness is that it is all Christlikeness. He never stands in front but always hides behind the form and loveliness of Jesus Christ. He never tells us of his perfections, but only the grace of his Saviour. The very watch-word of his life is: "I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is the highest as well as the lowliest form of holy character. If we could impress people with the fact that we are pre-eminently holy, we would discourage them, for they would put their own lives in contrast and say they could never reach us; but if we tell them of a life conscious of its weakness, that was able to take from another the strength it did not have, the righteousness it could not work out, the loveliness that was foreign to its nature, and that gracious One will be the same to others that He has been to you, then people are encouraged and lifted up.

The story of Paul's spiritual experience is a constant revelation of Jesus and His

nearness to, and sufficiency for the weakest heart, the humblest saint, the most strangely constituted and severely tried and hindered life. Three things were especially marked in Paul's saintliness. The first was what we might call righteousness, the quality of integrity, that essential foundation of all deeper and higher experience, a life right with God and man.

But this was not all. There was secondly a higher quality of Christian sweetness and loveliness. In one of his most striking passages he contrasts the righteous man with the good man. The righteous man is like the granite rock, hard, but yet true. But the good man is like the moss covered mountain side, radiant with flowers and fresh with springing cascades, beautiful as well as true, "For the good man," he says, one would "even dare to die," but for the righteous man "scarcely" would one die. Now Paul exhorts us to combine these two elements. "Whatsoever things are just" he speaks

of in one clause, "whatsoever things are lovely," in another, and he bids us combine them. In his own life they were beautifully blended. His holiness was not harsh, inaccessible, unattractive, but full of lowliness, gentleness, affectionateness, sympathy, consideration for others, simple as a child, loving as a woman, tender as a mother, affectionate as a father, the fountain of tears always ready to flow at a touch, a heart all throbbing with humanness as well as holiness. This is the life that wins and draws many and it will come from a higher source, from the heart of Jesus. It was he that wrote about love and lived it, too, but he might well have put the word "Christ" wherever he put "love" in the thirteenth chapter of I. Corinthians.

But there was a third element in the character of Paul for which Christ was equally sufficient, and that is the practical element, the element of sense, soundness of judgment, symmetry and balance of character. "God hath given us" he

says, "the spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind." It was this wonderful completeness that gave strength to every part of Paul's extraordinary life. Now the God that made him what he was is waiting to be the same to each of us if we will meet the tests and take Him at His word.

Paul was not only a pattern saint but a pattern sufferer. In one of the most remarkable passages of his letters he speaks of himself as a "spectacle and a gazing stock," and one set forth in the eyes of the universe to exhibit what God can be in a human life. He was exposed to the severest trials that can come to a human soul or body. Listen to the catalogue in II. Corinthians. "Of the Jews five times have I received forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the

heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils of sea, in perils of false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory I will glory of these things which concern mine infirmities."

Again we have a catalogue almost as startling (I. Cor. iv. 9-13). "For I think that God hath set forth us, the apostles, last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own

hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

Here he tells us that, as in the Roman games, the brutal master of ceremonies reserved for the last a bloody tragedy, and, after men's lives had been played with through the day, at last the thirst for blood was glutted and some noble gladiator was given over to be murdered in the arena. So, he says, "God has set forth us, the apostles, last, as it were, appointed to death," and then he speaks of every form of privation, suffering and distress, all that can come from physical drudgery, the deprivation of friends, of life, the cruel desertion of loved friends, the fury of the elements, the perils of the sea, the hate of Satan and the inner burdens that came to him for the sake of others through his sympathetic nature. Paul bore, as it were, the whole burden of the suffering body of Christ, and it

seemed as though it were appointed for him to endure that which remained of the afflictions of Christ for His body, the Church.

And yet how did he go through the fiery ordeal? Not only did he endure it but he was more than conqueror; not only did he stand it with patience, but he gloried in it with triumphant joy. Listen to him as he cries: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." Listen to him again, "As unknown, yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened and not as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things."

Listen to him once more as he tells the elders of Ephesus not only of what he has suffered but that the Holy Ghost has de-

livered him; that the whole way through it has been one unbroken chapter of continual sorrow. "In every city the Holy Ghost witnesseth unto me that bonds and afflictions abide me." And yet what does he add: "None of these things move me." They did not even disturb him nor take away his strength from the needs of others and the claims of his work. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify of the Gospel of the grace of God."

What was the secret of this wonderful patience, this victorious suffering? He tells us in another place how God answered him when he asked that the great burden of suffering be removed. The answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly therefore will I glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in neces-

sities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then am I strong." These things became to him but vessels to hold more of his Lord's grace, and so he not only endured them, but welcomed them and turned everything into victory and praise through the all-sufficient grace of Jesus Christ.

4. The God of Paul is a God that can strengthen and sustain the suffering body. Paul's experience reveals two phases. The first is the direct healing of actual sickness by the immediate manifestation of the power of God in the body. We read of one of these healing in II. Cor. i. 8-10. Here we are told of a case where he was "pressed out of measure, above strength," so that he despaired even of life. But God delivered him in direct answer to prayer.

We are told of another similar incident in the Acts of the Apostles, where he had been stoned to death apparently at Lystra, and as the disciples stood around him he arose upon his feet and went quietly

on with his work as though nothing had occurred.

But we have a second phase of divine life in Paul, revealed in the fourth chapter of II. Corinthians. This was not so much an immediate act of healing as a constant habit of drawing the life of Jesus Christ directly from Him and finding it a constant experience in his mortal flesh, enabling him to rise above the power of his own natural weakness and go through life with a weak frame and yet a supernatural strength. The same God can still be the same to us in our mortal flesh as well as in our spiritual life.

5. Finally the God of Paul is sufficient for all the service that He claims from us. Paul's life was pre-eminently one of service. "I labored more abundantly than they all," he could say, and yet he added, "yet not I, but the grace of Christ that was with me." He took the strength of Jesus and the Holy Spirit for every task and he counted himself equal to anything in this divine enduement. Indeed, every situation that came to him was but an

opportunity for service. If he was in prison he immediately went to work for the salvation of all the prisoners. If he was joined to two soldiers in the barracks, before morning they were converted, and writing to the Philippians from Rome he tells them the joyful news that all that are in the barracks have accepted Jesus Christ. Look at him on his voyage to Rome. We see a missionary starting off the greatest field in the world getting a free pass as a prisoner of the law, and and then taking command of the ship through that awful tempest, and first saving the lives and then the souls of all on board. Look at him again at Rome brought before the emperor, and even dragged into the Coliseum to fight with lions. How does he look at it? It is simply an opportunity for service. Here he has at last a chance to preach to old bloody Nero the message of judgment and salvation, and forgetting all about his own danger and even unconscious for the time of the roar of the Numidian lion in yonder cage, waiting perhaps to devour him,

his one thought is to be true to his trust and let God take care of him. Writing about this incident he says: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known." And he adds: "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." His business was to preach to Nero; God's business was to look out for the lion.

In the face of a thousand disadvantages with neither churches nor missionary boards to back him, in a single lifetime this marvelous man carried the Gospel to all the leading cities of the world, and planted churches from which all the Christianity on earth to-day has come down. What was the secret of it all? "My God," and "His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Beloved, will you have Paul's God, and will you use His infinite resources for such a life of saintliness, victorious suffering and holy service as he?

THE GOD OF JACOB.

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob" (Isa. xli. 14).

"I am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob" (Isa. xlix. 26).

WHAT a combination! Thou worm Jacob, the Mighty One of Jacob! A worm united to Omnipotence! What so weak and worthless as a worm! What so mighty as the Mighty One of Jacob! This tells the story—not Jacob, but Jacob's God; not man, but the all-sufficient God displacing man and substituting His own infinite fulness.

We have seen a little of the resources of God in the story of Elijah and Elisha and in the life of Paul. But some one might say all this might well occur in lives so lofty and sublime, but can I, a weak and worthless man, reach such heights of victory and glory?

Therefore we turn now to the life of a weak and worthless man that we may

show that God uses such men to make them the peculiar illustrations of His own grace and sufficiency. The one lesson of Jacob's life is sovereign grace. We have already seen that this was the one lesson of Paul's life and that his deepest thought and highest testimony was "Not I; but Christ who liveth in me."

If ever there was a man that deserved to be called a worm it was the supplanting son of Isaac. And yet this was the man whom God selected among all the patriarchs to make him head of Israel's tribes and the real founder of the covenant people to whom was committed the oracles of God. Therefore Jacob is more especially fitted to set forth the grace of God than any other of the Bible characters. Let us look at the lessons which his life illustrates with respect to the resources of our God.

1. We see in Jacob's life the God who can choose and use the unworthy and unattractive lives and characters. Had we been choosing on natural principles be-

tween the two sons of Isaac we would probably have preferred the big-hearted, impulsive Esau. For this reason his father did prefer him and tried his best to hold for him the tribal blessing and divine birthright. There was little naturally in Jacob to attract one. Without using the term in an approbrious sense he was a real Jew. He represented that class of the Hebrew race, happily by no means all, who have become the embodiment of the hard, keen, grasping man, the man who seems to have become crystallized into a financial machine, and bargain counter. Jacob was intensely selfish and with it deceitful, and naturally dishonorable, and disposed to take advantage of another's misfortune. There is no type of human nature that by the common consent of mankind is more detestable than the hard, cold, heartless miser. He is lower even than the grovelling sensualist in the scale of humanity. And yet God chose this man on purpose to prove that there is no class of humanity so

hard, so hopeless, as not to be within reach of sovereign grace, indeed, that God loves a hard case, and that "where sin aboundeth, grace doth much more abound."

If there is a soul reading these lines, discouraged about itself or about some other life that is dear to it, and for which there seems no natural basis of nobility or spirituality, remember Jacob, and then remember Jacob's God, the One that could choose a worm and make him a prince with God and with men; the One that is still saying, "God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, the foolish things to confound the wise, yea, and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh may glory in His presence."

II. The God of Jacob is a God that can discern elements of good and possibilities of the highest things in the most unlikely lives. For back of Jacob's meanness there was something that had in it inherently the elements of power and blessing,

and back of Esau's apparent nobility there was something earthborn and incapable of the highest things. Not without reason has God said of these two men, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." What was it in Jacob that God loved, and that became a point of contact with His grace? It was that element which we might call the spiritual. It was the peculiar insight into the higher things which discerns and chooses the best. It is a kind of intuition, a spiritual instinct, the germ in fact, of the higher nature. It enabled Jacob to discover, to appreciate and intensely desire all that was meant in the divine birthright, while on the other hand the lack of it led Esau to despise this. All he cared for was the gratification of his natural and grosser appetites. He was a splendid animal, that was all. When he was hungry he wanted food, and he cared not how he got it. He had not power to comprehend or prize the higher blessing which was his by natural right. In the hour of his extremity we

find him exclaiming, "Behold, I am at the point to die. What profit then shall this birthright be to me?" That was the very time when it should have meant most to him, for it secured to him the favor of his covenant God, a part among the covenant people and the high honor of standing in the front of that line that was to lead up to the promised seed, the coming Messiah. While it had the highest natural dignities and privileges connected with it, it was pre-eminently spiritual in its meaning and value. And yet Esau realized none of these things, but recklessly and blindly threw it away for a mess of pottage and the sacred writer crystallizes into a single sentence the meaning of the act, "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

Now what God loved in Jacob was the quality that appreciated, desired and chose the higher things. God loved him for it and God came to meet him and gave him what he desired. "They have their reward," is the awful sentence of Christ

on humanity. Men and women generally get what they want. If they are after earthly things they will probably find them. If they "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" "they that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled."

It is often true that the worst and the best are closely akin in human nature. The most discouraged and sinful man is often so because the devil has seen his folly and has perverted the bud into a thorn. God sees everything through the crust of evil, the jewel yet undimmed of some deep and earnest longing for better things and He comes to meet it and satisfy it. It is comforting to know that we have a God that is not looking for the evil in us but for the good that is trying to find some point of contact with better things, and looking in every human soul for some place where the chain of mercy can fasten and lift us to the skies. Dear friend, if you are far away from God and conscious of utter unworthiness, there is

one question we would ask you, Would you have God's love for your heart? Would you choose His will if it were offered to you? Would you part with everything to have the best and highest things? Then you have that which God loved in Jacob and that which like the needle to the pole will feel after God until it find Him.

III. We see in Jacob's God one who can reveal Himself to a soul that is utterly ignorant of Him. When Jacob went out from his father's house and his mother's arms he had indeed set his heart on the highest things so far as he knew them, and won by a very unworthy transaction the covenant, but as yet he knew nothing of God in his own experience. We see this in his confession in Bethel's cave, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not."

We see also the lack of all filial love and confidence. "How dreadful is this place." It was a raw, unlightened, natural heart shrinking from the presence of

God, knowing nothing of trust and love. But to that poor, dark, lonely heart God came and made Himself known by that vision of divine light and revelation, which became, not only to him, but to all coming generations, a ladder reaching to heaven from the lowest, loneliest spot from which the human heart can turn to God. Well do I remember the day that I rode along the bridle path that leads to the ruins of ancient Bethel, stopping from time to time at the numerous caves along the road and wondering in which of them Jacob lay down with a stone for his pillow on the first night of his absence from his home. My guide pointed across the valley, and he said, "This is the cave where Jacob slept, because yonder you can see on the rock hillside the great ledges of stone rise one above the other like mighty steps, and in the dim moonlight, you know, it seemed to Jacob like a ladder that reached to heaven." You see my guide was an accomplished higher critic. He thought he could explain the

Bible without any supernatural element. I told him I knew better, the ladder Jacob saw was not even that bold ledge of ascending rocks, but it was that invisible stair which your faith and mine has often seen since, reaching from our helplessness to His high heaven and bringing down the angels of God on messages of help and blessing. That was the time when Jacob first met with God.

There comes such an hour in every redeemed life. You have known about Him, you have chosen Him, you have set your heart upon Him, but He has never yet become a real fact in your experience; but some night of loneliness, some hour of deep trouble, some crisis when you are forced to pray; you find God and He becomes revealed to you henceforth as the greatest fact in your life, as the One with whom you have to do, as your covenant God and Friend, saying to you as He did to Jacob, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, for I will not leave thee until I

have done all that I have spoken to thee of." It is yours to choose Him. It is His to make Himself known and it is His eternal promise: "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."

IV. The God of Jacob is one that follows His children even through years of imperfection and wandering, and while they are often far from Him. For Jacob went forth from that Bethel vision a new man and a man of God, but still full of the old selfish, supplanting spirit. And so we see him following his own devices, fighting his own battles, intriguing with Laban and trying to match his cunning with equal cunning. We see him bargaining for a wife and losing in the first transaction. We see him later getting the better of his uncle, and finally, through deep strategy leaving the land of his temporary adoption possessed of boundless riches; and yet the same old Jacob in many ways. He had not forsaken God. He had prayed often. He had asked God to prosper him in his business contri-

vances and schemes. But still it was Jacob, the worm Jacob, the selfish, supplanting Jew. But God did not leave him all these years. He followed him, loved him, blessed him, prospered him, and in due time called him back to better things.

And so, dear child of God, He has followed you even amid your wanderings. He has not wanted you where you were; but He has not left you alone. As He went with Israel through the wilderness, so He has gone with you on the weary round. In all your affliction He has been afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence has saved you and He has led you all your days. Thus God still loves His imperfect children. He does not forsake them in their mistakes and follies, but He is still a God of infinite longsuffering, boundless patience and tender, fatherly pity. Let not this encourage us in living short of our highest privileges but let it lead us by grateful love to follow Him more closely and choose His highest will.

V. We see in Jacob's God one who at

last knew how to bring the pressure that led Jacob to the crisis of his life. The time had come for a new and deeper experience, and so God led him back toward his ancient home. It is the old Jacob that is coming back. He is enlarged with flocks and herds and a great household, but we see Jacob all through his wise forethought, his infinite contriving to protect his family and his flocks, and when he finds his incensed brother Esau coming to meet him with an armed band, he exhausts all the resources of his skill and invention to forestall him or defend himself from him. He divides his family and his flocks into little bands so that if one is stricken the other will escape. At last he realizes how vain it all is, and he is thrown absolutely and helplessly upon the mercy and power of God.

The way narrows to a lone path where only two can walk, God and Jacob. There just across the brook Jabbok and under the solemn stars of the Orient, Jacob is face to face with the crisis of his

life. He must either go down or go higher. It is either God or ruin. And so the religious instinct turns heavenward. Jacob prays as he has never prayed before.

But there is another conflict. God is wrestling with Jacob more than Jacob is wrestling with God. We are told significantly that "there wrestled a man with him till the break of day." It was the Son of man. It was the Angel of the Covenant. It was God in human form pressing down and pressing out the old Jacob life, and ere the morning broke God had prevailed and Jacob fell with his thigh dislocated. But as he fell, he fell into the arms of God and there he clung and wrestled too until the blessing came, and the new life was born and he arose from the earthly to the heavenly, the human to the divine, the natural to the supernatural, and as he went forth that morning he was a weak and broken man, but God was there instead and the heavenly voice proclaimed, "Thou shalt no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for

thou hast power with God and with men and hast prevailed."

Beloved, this must ever be a typical scene in every transformed life. There comes a crisis hour to each of us if God has called us to the highest and best; when all our resources fail; when we face either ruin or something higher than we ever dreamed; when we must have infinite help from God and yet ere we can have it we must let something go; we must surrender completely; we must cease from our own wisdom, strength and righteousness and become crucified with Christ and alive in Him. God knows how to lead us up to this crisis and He knows how to lead us through. Beloved, is He leading you thus? Is this the meaning of your deep trial, of your difficult surroundings, of that impossible situation, or that trying place through which you cannot go without Him and yet you have not enough of Him to give you the victory? Oh, turn to Jacob's God. Cast yourself helplessly at His feet. Die to your

strength and wisdom in His loving arms and rise like Jacob into His strength and all-sufficiency. There is no way out of your hard and narrow place but at the top. You must get deliverance by rising higher and coming into a new experience with God. Oh, may it bring you into all that is meant by the revelation of the Mighty One of Jacob.

VI. We see in Jacob's God the God who knows how to finish His work by the slow discipline of suffering. That experience at Jabbok was the real crisis; but the completion of the work required the year that followed. There is something which God can only do through time. There are processes of grace that need to be carried through long years of discipline. There's a slow fire which dissolves and consumes as no fierce furnace heat can ever do in a moment of time. There is One that sits as a Refiner and Purifier of silver through the long years, finishing His work until He can see His image in the molten metal. This is the God of Ja-

cob. And so, through the forty years that followed, He led Jacob through the longest, slowest, hardest trials. And how keen the pain! how sensitive the spirit that He touched!

So He comes to you, beloved, in the place that hurts you most. Often it is our heart's deepest affections. And so Rachel died; and so his family pride was wounded in the dishonor of his daughter, and so, at last Joseph, Rachel's son, was torn from his presence amid scenes and associations of unspeakable horror, and the years dragged out their slow length with that haunting shadow of suspense and agony, until at last he cried, "All these things are against me." But all the while Jacob was being burned up and God burned in. And when at last we meet him in the calm sunset of his life we hear the rash, self-confident man saying something that he could not have learned otherwise, "I have waited for Thy salvation, oh God." And we see the sorrow at last turned into joy. We see

the shadows pass away and the rainbow arch surmount their frowning masses. We hear the evening song of a victorious life, "The God that fed and led me all my life long, the Angel that redeemed me from all evil." We see even Joseph given back and all the sorrow turned into joy while its blessed spiritual lesson remains forevermore in the transformed life of the venerable patriarch and the established saint. Thus the God of Jacob knows how to try us and how to deliver us out of trial. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you," but "that the trial of your faith being much more precious than gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire shall be found unto praise and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

VII. The God of Jacob is a God that loves to use the instrument that He has thus prepared, and so it was not Abraham the mighty believer; it was not Isaac, the meek and gentle son; but it was Jacob, the transformed supplanter,

that God chose to be the head of Israel's tribes and the founder of the chosen people, and who, on his dying bed, pronounced the prophetic blessing upon his seed which all the ages since then have been fulfilling. To this day the nation bears the name of Israel and the seed of Jacob.

And so God will take our lives when He has prepared them in proportion to what they have cost Him. The degree of power that comes out of an element is measured by the degree that goes into it. The mighty power that runs the steamer and the train comes out of yonder coal mine, but all that power was put in the coal mine ages ago, when God burned up by fiery heat of primeval times the vast forests of vegetation that covered the world and turned them into coal. It first came down from heaven into the mines of earth and now it goes out from the mines of earth in another form of the same power.

And so after God has pressed into a

life by long and hard processes of trial and discipline the influences of His grace and the power of His transforming spirit, then He loves to take out of that life the same power and expend it upon others. Power never can be lost, and so if we receive of God's fulness we can no more help giving it out than the sun can stop shining. And so the God of Jacob, if we will let Him have us, hold us, fill us, will surely use us, and whether it be as the silent salt that penetrates the air with its wholesome savor, or the glorious light that more positively radiates over earth and sky, we shall become forces for good and instruments for the glory of God and the blessing of our fellow man, and all flesh shall know "that I, thy Saviour and Redeemer, am the Mighty One of Jacob."

THE GOD OF ESTHER.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shall Thou restrain" (Ps. lxxvi. 10).

"For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed, and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther iv. 14).

WE have been looking at the divine character and resources as illustrated in the lives of remarkable men occupying a high place in the stage of history and kingdom of God. We are now to look at the revelation of God as it appears in a unique and very different situation, in the life of a lone girl and a despised man, far removed from sympathy and influence and called to face the most trying difficulties and the most terrific dangers. The story of Esther tells us how God can meet such a life and

make the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder thereof restrain.

The story is soon told. It is one of the romances of the Bible. It is a chapter from the reign of Xerxes, the rich and splendid king of Persia, whose mighty army of millions was defeated by the brave Greeks. The drama opens with a splendid feast costing millions of dollars. In the height of the gayety the King called for his beautiful and favorite wife to appear before his drunken lords and gratify their coarse curiosity by what always is to an Eastern woman a sacrifice of modesty, the exhibition of her beautiful face. Vashti refused and was deposed from her high place and another sought to fill it.

In the family of an upright Jew named Mordecai, was a beautiful maiden, his niece, and to her lot it fell in the providences of God to inherit the crown of Vashti and to become queen of Persia.

The favorite of Xerxes was a proud noble named Haman. Haman and his

vanity were deeply wounded by the refusal of Mordecai to pay the worship and obeisance that he claimed from the people. Mordecai disdained to degrade himself at the feet of any man and so Haman tried to destroy him. The plot moves on with dramatic force. Haman is too proud to wreak his vengeance upon Mordecai alone, but determines upon a magnificent revenge, the destruction of his people, the entire Jewish nation scattered throughout the empire of Persia and numbering doubtless many millions. In an evil hour he won the consent of Xerxes and the decree went forth, signed by the king's royal signet, which none could reverse, that on a certain day the whole Jewish population could be massacred under official sanction. In addition to this he planned the destruction of Mordecai himself and even went so far as to erect the gallows on which he was to be hung.

But God's providences now begin to work. First it came about that Morde-

cai was the instrument of saving the life of the king by revealing a secret plot upon his life, and after having been neglected for a long time, suddenly God laid upon the heart of the king the remembrances of his kindness and led him to issue a royal decree which Haman himself was compelled to carry out for a public tribute to Mordecai in the sight of the whole population and of the most distinguished character.

But Mordecai did not rest in quiet inaction, but immediately called upon Esther to rise to the occasion and meet the great purpose for which God had exalted her to her high station. This meant nothing less than that Esther should go into the presence of her king and plead for the lives of her people. This was rendered peculiarly difficult by the fact that Esther herself had not been summoned into the king's presence for many days and she felt that her venture unbidden might cost her her life. It was then that Mordecai addressed to her the stirring

and solemn message of the text. "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shalt be destroyed; and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

This decided her, and asking her uncle to help her by his prayers, she ventured into the presence of the king. God was with her. The golden sceptre was stretched out and her royal lord bade her ask anything she chose even unto half of the kingdom. Esther was tactful enough not to press her petition too soon but she asked the king to a banquet that day and invited Haman to accompany him. But again Esther still waited another day, renewing the invitation and still waiting on God to prepare the way and show her the very moment when she was to act. At last the crisis moment came and it came just after Mordecai had been significantly honored by the public tribute or-

dered by the king. Haman had just returned from the hated service when he went into the presence of the king and queen to the banquet and then it was that Esther turning indignantly upon him demanded protection from his wickedness and cruelty for her people. Haman unwittingly in pleading for her mercy insulted her before the king, and then it was that the royal wrath would brook no delay but ordered his wicked courtier to immediate execution. Then Esther obtained not the reversal of the decree of the massacre which was impossible under the Persian law, but the issue of another decree under the royal seal by which the Jews throughout the empire were permitted to defend themselves and were even invited to do so under royal approval. This turned the scale on their side and when the eventful day came their threatened destruction was turned into a universal triumph and their enemies fell before them while they had life, deliverance, honor and joy. The Feast of

Purim is the memorial of this great deliverance and to this day it is celebrated among the Hebrew people as one of the most joyous observances of all their sacred year.

This romantic story is full of spiritual lessons and revelations of God.

I. It teaches us that God rules in the affairs of nations and overrules political events for His glory and the establishment of His kingdom. Above the throne of the king of Persia was the authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. "Christ is Head over all things for His church," and the government of nations and the events of providences are but the working out of God's higher will, the scaffolding on which He is building up His spiritual kingdom and His eternal purpose for His people. The very king of Persia arose in the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy. The very throne of Xerxes was but a foundation on which God had meant to build the story of Esther and her people. God used the kingdom to be at once

a refuge for His people and a discipline for them in their sins and an occasion for His wonderful providences in their deliverances.

II. We see the plans and pleasures of the ungodly used by God for higher purposes. The costly and extravagant banquet of Xerxes, the deposition of his queen, and even his own selfish desire for the most beautiful maiden in his empire—all these became links in God's providence for bringing Esther to the front and using her for the great trust which she should afterwards fulfil in the deliverance of His people.

And so the business of the world, the pomp and pleasure of the world, all these are simply occasions for God to introduce the history of His own people and the working out of some greater plan. Just as the court of Persia was but the home of Nehemiah and the house of Pharaoh the place for Moses to be trained, so Xerxes' place was but a providential door through which Esther might pass

upon the stage of providence and work out her beautiful and glorious career of faith and victory.

III. Our gifts, qualities, talents and stations in life are all part of the divine plan and trusts given us by God to be used for Him. Esther's beauty was not her own, but God's endowment. Esther's high and queenly place was not an opportunity for a selfish and splendid life, but was a door of service for God and her people. Her influence over the king was not given her that she might aggrandize her own interests and fortune, but that she might use it in time of need to help the cause of Jehovah. And so our natural qualities of person, and our wealth, our social position, our plans, our public positions of power or influence—these are all sacred trusts that God has placed in our hands for us to use for Him, and of us He says as He did of Esther, "How knowest thou whether thou be come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Beloved, are we so using

them? Do we count all things His and not our own, and are we watching every opportunity to turn them to account for the purpose for which they are given us?

IV. We learn from the story of Esther that God often permits things to occur, and then be apparently forgotten, for the purpose of using them at a later period and as links in His providential plan. The little incident of Mordecai saving the life of the king which was allowed to pass by without recognition was not God's fault, and in due time came up at the opportune moment and became the turning point in Mordecai's career, arousing for him the sympathy and recognition of the king and the people and preparing him for a place of high trust that he afterwards filled. So God lets things happen in our lives, little acts of obedience, faith, sacrifice, unrecognized, and we forget all about them perhaps, but in due time the wheel of providence turns round and they come to the front and God makes them the occasion of some high calling, some

marvelous opening, some grand reward.

Let us count nothing insignificant. God is working in everything and far in advance of all that we can see. Let us watch for the fulfilment of His plan and we shall always have providences to watch.

V. God often lays His burdens on the hearts of men who do not know Him, and uses them unconsciously to carry out His plans. "I have created thee, though thou hast not known Me," was His word to Cyrus, that mighty king who was God's direct instrument for carrying out one of His greatest plans, although he himself was an ignorant and superstitious heathen. And so He spoke to Xerxes and made him understand His will. There was a night when the luxurious Persian king was unable to close his eyes in sleep. As he lay dozing on his bed he felt something was wrong, and when the morning dawned, he sent for his counsellors and had them search the records of the kingdom until they found that the faithful

Mordecai had never been rewarded for his great service in saving the king's life.

What a glimpse this gives us into the mysteries of divine government. What a meaning it adds to the mighty announcement of our ascended King, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." He is able to move the hearts of men for our defence at His will while we calmly wait, keeping our hands off and looking to Him to work for us and to shield us with His mighty wing. I have known an ungodly man to become so impressed that he must give a large amount for some of God's suffering children, that he could not rest until the trust was discharged, although he wondered at himself and could not explain or even justify his impulsive action. One of the largest gifts ever offered for missions in this country was a bequest made by a man who had never had any special interest in missions until his last days, and who made this bequest after some friends had specially prayed that God would send help for His

cause. We have a God that can reach all hearts, and there are people whom we could not reach directly whom we can always touch by way of the throne.

VI. God often permits the wicked for a time to triumph and the cause of His people to reach a crisis of danger and the crisis almost to go too far. How imminent the peril of Esther's people! How close the coincidences! How sudden and swift the interposition of God and the deliverance of the doomed nation. It almost seemed as if things had gone too far. Everything was encompassed with difficulty. Only the Divine hand could avert it. But how perfectly everything fitted together. How sharply the whole drama was focussed into one short day of astounding surprises! Truth indeed was stranger than fiction, and as is ever true, the story of faith is the sublimest romance of human history. Beloved, is He trying you? Are your difficulties and adversaries thickening on every side? Does it almost seem as though the promise lin-

gered so long that it might come too late? Trust Him. His path is in the whirlwind and the storm. The clouds are the dust of His feet. He will not let the promise fail. "Though it tarry, wait for it, for it shall surely come. It will not tarry too long."

VII. God has His plans prepared in advance of the devil's maneuvers and His instruments ready to counteract his deepest designs. Zechariah tells us in one of his visions of four horns, that the enemy sent out to pierce God's people but of four carpenters that followed close behind them to fray their horns and take away their power to harm. So here while the devil had his weak and unscrupulous Xerxes ready by his rash decree to destroy a nation, God had His wise and upright Mordecai in the place of faith and influence prepared to counteract his folly. The devil had his diabolical Haman but the Lord had His Esther a little nearer the center of power to interpose just at the right moment. There are no surprises

in the government of God. He is always prepared for the enemy and if we abide in Him and closely follow Him there is no power in earth or hell that can ever harm us.

VIII. While God is ever watching and working to defend His people and His cause, yet He expects from them their prompt, obedient and courageous co-operation in the crisis hour. There are occasions when there is nothing for us to do but wait and trust, but there are moments for prompt, wise, decisive action, and when those moments come there must be no parleying and hesitation or half-heartedness. Such a moment came to Esther when her uncle directed her to go into the presence of the king and plead for her people. It was natural for her to hesitate, but it would have been folly for her to have disobeyed. God had other agencies that He could have raised up, and, indeed, Mordecai firmly believed that deliverance and enlargement would come from some other

quarter if she had failed, but she would have perished and her father's house. There are times, dear friend, when you and I must speak brave words for right, must incur prejudice and misrepresentation because we stand by a cause that needs assistance, but the safest thing is always to be brave and true. Let us not hesitate to speak a word of vindication, to stand at the risk of interest, friendship or even life itself for the cause of truth, for the work of God. It needs much wisdom to show us just when to be still and when to act. There is a moment when the order is, "Stand still and see the salvation of God," but there is another moment when the order is, "Speak unto the people that they go forward," and when that moment comes decisive action is the only course of safety and honor.

IX. God not only saves us from the wicked but lets them fall into their own snares. The gallows that Haman erected for Mordecai furnished the means for his own execution. The decree that called

for the massacre of the Hebrews brought instead the destruction of their enemies. The man that was doomed by the conspiracy of his adversaries to death was lifted into the place that these very enemies had formerly held. The way of the wicked was turned upsidedown, and their shafts reverted upon their own heads. It is a terrible thing to take a stand against God or His people. Christ counts the persecutions of His children as His own. Our hatred and opposition to the cause of Christ and the servants of Christ is counted by the Scriptures as our fighting even against God, and it is a fearful thing to plunge against the sword of the Almighty. Let us be careful how we touch God's anointed or wrong His servants. Such weapons will be turned against ourselves in bitter failure and retribution. We cannot be too careful in speaking against the children of God. We are very liable to be misled and even where we are not able to commend, silence is often the safest course. But they

who scatter firebrands, arrows and death shall find their own houses on fire and their own hearts pierced by the returning shafts.

X. There are crisis times in the history of individuals and religious movements and those are times of peculiar responsibility. Such a time had come in the life of Esther and on that moment converged all the significance of her life and all the preparation of God's providence in the years before. Surely if ever there was a crisis time in the history of the world it is to-day. Beloved, let us remember as we close that we too are come to the kingdom for such a time as this. All things are focusing into the consuming light of the world's last crisis. God has given to each of us our kingdom of opportunity, natural ability, providential environment, or spiritual endowment for the most solemn and important responsibilities and ministries. May He help us to be wholly true "Redeeming the time."

THE VISION OF GOD.

"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in sackcloth and ashes" (Job xlii. 5, 6).

THE book of Job is the world's oldest poem and present some of the profoundest spiritual teachings of the book of revelation. It is an inspired drama and its design is twofold; namely, First, to unfold the principles of God's moral government in dealing with men; secondly, to show the inadequacy of human nature to stand the tests of life without a deeper and diviner spiritual life.

The leading figure of the drama is a man who stands above his fellow-men in all the best qualities of human character. By the testimony of God he is a good man, the best man on earth, a man who "fears God and escheweth evil." He is undoubtedly a servant of God and we would call him a converted man. But he

has not yet passed through the deeper experience of self-crucifixion which brings the soul into the divine nature and the experience of true sanctification.

To this man God permits the severest tests to come. The first part of the dramatic scene appears in the deep inquiries of his friends and counselors into the cause and explanation of his peculiar trial. Three men come to him from the wise men of the East, three eminent philosophers and moralists, representing all the best qualities of the wisdom of the world. Their very names are significant of the honor, the strength, the wealth, the beauty, and wisdom of the world. Day after day through his protracted and distracting trial they sit by his side; they talk with him; they vainly try to comfort him. They still more vainly try to instruct him in the principles of divine government and show him that he must be guilty of some great iniquity or God would not thus afflict him. Each of them has three turns and Job in turn answers each of

them three times. But when it is all ended none of them are wiser than at first. Job is utterly unsatisfied with their consolations and exhortations, and dismisses them with the honest and sarcastic words: "Miserable comforters are ye."

They represent the world's best philosophy and wisdom, and they prove the utter inadequacy of the human mind by all its searching to "find out God."

But trial develops yet another fact, and that is the failure of Job. The good man soon breaks down under his terrible continued affliction, and begins to vindicate himself and reflect upon God for the injustice and severity of his affliction.

Then a fourth character appears upon the scene. It is Elihu, whose name signifies his direct relation to God as His servant and messenger; and he comes with an entirely new message, even with the inspired Word of God Himself. Twice he speaks and Job also answers him, but all his profound and deeply spiritual teaching fall in vain upon the ears

of the tried and distracted sufferer. A stronger influence, a diviner touch are necessary before at length his heart will yield and his lesson be fully learned.

At last it comes and it comes only through the direct revelation of God Himself. After they had all spoken and Job had again and again re-echoed and repeated his complaints and self-justification, God suddenly appears upon the scene in a sublime vision of majesty and power, and speaks to him from the midst of the whirlwind. The message is in two sections interrupted by a brief pause in which Job breaks down and sinks in silence and submission before God's demand, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God let him answer it." And Job replies: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further" (Job xl. 2-5).

But God proceeds with His majestic

message through the next two chapters, unfolding to Job the majesty and glory of the natural creation, pointing to the forces of nature, the stars in their courses, the ordinances of heaven, the clouds and lightnings, the springs of the sea, the providence that supplies the wants of every living thing, the instincts of the birds, the mighty creatures that roam in the ocean and depths of the forest, and as the vision of God's majesty and glory passes before the mind of the humble and broken penitent, all his pride and self-vindication passes away; and he cries: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

This was at length the crisis of Job's spiritual life. This was the death of self and the beginning of the life of God and from this hour the whole story turns upon its axis and the whole life and experience of Job becomes transformed. The moment he condemns himself God be-

gins to justify him. The moment he sinks in the dust God begins to lift him up. The moment he ceases arguing and contending with his friends, and begins to pray for them, God turns his captivity and brings them to bow at his feet and ask his forgiveness and his prayers, and from this hour even his temporal circumstances are changed, his trials pass away, all that he has lost is restored to him twofold, and henceforth life flows on upon a new plane of resurrection power, glory and blessing. Let us look, therefore, more closely at this turning-point, this crisis of a life, this great example which God has held out to us in the story of His ancient servant.

I. The words of our text remind us of the value of a revelation of divine truth. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear." This describes the revelation which comes to the outward ear, and the natural intelligence which it represents. In the drama of the book of Job, Elihu represents the revelation of God's Word

which comes to the ear and to the mind. Now, it is needless to say that the revelation of God's will and purpose is absolutely necessary and is the foundation of all deeper spiritual revelations to the soul, but at the same time, the revelation of the truth is not known without the deeper revelation of God Himself to the inner spirit by the Holy Ghost. It requires a spiritual mind to understand the teaching of the Spirit. The cold, natural intellect cannot receive the things of God by the hearing of the ear alone. Therefore it happens that many of the brightest and profoundest minds have failed to understand the deeper teachings of the Scriptures and have even become in these days of higher criticism the enemies of the Bible and the misinterpreters of the volume they have professed to elucidate and explain. The greatest weakness of Christianity to-day arises from the fact that so many of its followers have only heard of God by the hearing of the ear. Therefore

II. Our text teaches us the need of a deeper revelation of God Himself. "Now mine eye seeth Thee," he cries. It is not the truth but the God of truth. It is not the story but the persons behind it. It is not the Book but its Author and Inspirer that we are now dealing with. This is the mission of the Holy Ghost, to reveal God through the truth and back of the truth to the earnest and inquiring soul. This was the experience that had come to Job and which broke his heart, humbled his pride, slew his self-sufficiency and made room in his heart and life for God.

This has ever been the turning point of every great spiritual life. Far off in Mesopotamia we are told "the God of Glory appeared unto Abraham," and from that moment the whole story of faith began. It was easy for him to leave his country and his home. It was easy for him to go into an unknown future. There was One henceforth with him he personally knew, and in whose appearance all else became as nothing. God had appeared unto him.

Later another figure appears on the scene at a still greater crisis in the history of redemption. It is the great law-giver, Moses. But the secret of Moses' life is all given in a single sentence: "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible." He had met God. He always saw Him, and the deepest cry of Moses' heart and life was uttered later when he prayed: "Lord, I beseech Thee show me Thy glory." "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence, for wherein shall we be separated from all the people of the earth except it be in this, that Thou goest with us?"

The next great life that stands out in bold relief in Israel's story is David, and the one predominant and determining feature of his life was godliness. "I have set the Lord always before me," is the watchword of his whole experience. Isaiah's call came in that hour of which he says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up," and then he passed through an experience precisely

the same as that of Job in the present instance.

The greatest character of Scripture, the mighty Paul, started upon his new career from the moment he saw a vision of the Lord Jesus, and from that hour there was one Face, one Form, one Presence, one thought that dominated his life, the vision, the presence, the will of his Master.

The greatest moment in every life is when Jesus Christ becomes actually present and intensely real and vivid in our consciousness and life. Beloved, has that moment come to you? Have you passed from the mere stage of intellectual knowledge of Christ to personal intimacy? Is it the historical Christ, or is it the Christ of to-day of whom you can say as one of the devoutest of the German writers said: "It seems to me as if Jesus Christ had been crucified only yesterday."

III. The effect of the vision of God. Its effect on Job was marked and immediate.

I. It brought about the death of self. The glare of that sunburst of divine glory blinded him to every other light and sight and especially to the sight of himself. All his vindications, justifications, self-complacencies were gone. In the light of God's glory he could only see himself as worthless and utterly vile and he longed to get out of his own sight and never see himself again. It was not merely that he took back his words and repudiated his acts, but he hated and renounced himself. Self-denial is not giving up a few things, but it is letting self go and refusing any longer to know ourselves, to live for ourselves or to expect any good from ourselves. This was the effect of the vision of God upon Isaiah. When he saw Jehovah in His glory he cried, "I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips. Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." This was the effect on Daniel, "When I saw this great vision," he tells us, "there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was

turned in me into corruption and I retained no strength." This is the only way that self can ever die; a sight of Christ, and above all, the reception of Christ to live and reign in the heart and life and will, will drive out every rival and especially that oldest and worst rival of all, our own will, our own self-confidence, self-righteousness, and self-love.

2. The next effect of the revelation of God was the uplifting of his heart to a higher plane of divine life. Immediately we find him praying for his enemies. If there is a greater miracle than another it is when human hate becomes transformed into heavenly love. There is nothing so hard as to really love the people who have exasperated, tried and tormented us, and especially those that have done this like Job's friends, in the name of religion. But the vision of God made Job equal to it. There came such a flood of divine life and love into his soul that colored everything henceforth with its own color. When the heart receives Christ it

sees everything and every one in the light of Christ, and it loves not as man, but as God loves.

3. All this was followed by Job's vindication by God Himself. Job did not need to be revenged upon the men who had wronged him, for God took them in hand, and sent them to make amends themselves by humble acknowledgement of their error, by sacrificing to God and by asking Job to pray for them. The best revenge that we can have upon the people that have done us wrong is to be the means of blessing them. When we die to self and become one with God, God makes even our enemies to be at peace with us, brings good out of evil and turns the curse into a blessing. "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the waste places shall be builded, and the desolate land shall be delivered, and they shall say, This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden."

4. Finally God Himself restored to Job doubly all that he had lost before. He gave him back his health by a divine miracle and added to his years twice as many as he had had before; so that Job lived after his restoration one hundred and forty years, and probably before his life ended he had reached at least two hundred years, older even than Abraham himself.

He gave him back his family, and it is particularly mentioned that the daughters of Job were the most beautiful women in the land, and their names are all significant of the highest qualities both of person and of heart.

He gave him back his property so that he had twice as much in every kind of earthly ware as he had formerly enjoyed, and He blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning.

All this is still true: "See ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Not necessarily in this world shall

it come to pass in the life of a saint that earthly prosperity shall be measured out to him in proportion to the spiritual blessing, but before the circle is completed, before the true life is finished, it will be made real, for this is but a segment of the circle, but a chapter of the story. It is when He comes again that all the promises of blessing that come to the consecrated soul shall be fully realized and that the "all things" shall be completely added. Thus "he that hath forsaken houses or lands for Christ's sake shall receive" not double but a "hundredfold." Then shall it be true: "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him." Then the lives that have died to self and sin shall sit with Him on His throne, shall share "the power of an endless life," and shall receive for every cross a crown, and for every weight of pain "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and for the little sacrifice of a surrendered life an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away."

THE SECRET OF THE VISION.

"Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat! * * Behold, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him. He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him (Job xxiii. 3, 8, 9).

THIS is the cry of the soul that longs for God and feels after Him if haply it may find Him. This is the deepest cry of every true spirit, the deepest need of every human life and the greatest prayer that God can answer for a soul. For "this is life eternal that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent."

How shall we find God? How shall He become to our consciousness more real and satisfying than any other personality and other need?

1. We can find God in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

Nature alone is not able to reveal God in His gracious character as the sinful soul needs to know Him, but after we know Him from His Word, then nature is full of the most blessed illustrations of His character and the most vivid unfoldings of His love and power and the whole creation becomes to the consecrated soul a great temple with the blue heavens for its dome, the glowing stars for its lamps of fire, the vernal earth for its emerald pavement, and the voices of the ocean, the thunder, the hum and song of the whole animated creation for its ceaseless anthem of worship and praise. There is a sense in which everything we see in this beautiful world is but a letter in the great alphabet of truth and tells of Him who

"Shines in the sun,
Refreshes in the breeze,
Glowes in the stars,
And blossoms in the trees.
Lives through all life,
Extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided,
Operates unspent."

I am sorry for the man that cannot see God in every turn of the beautiful kaleidoscope of nature and hear His voice in every note of the great organ of this voiceful world.

2. We find God in His Word. Nature alone spells out but half the sentence and writes upon the heavens and earth, "God is," but leaves an awful blank and note of interrogation. The Bible alone can finish the sentence and write the complete revelation, "God is Love." The nineteenth Psalm, from which we have quoted quickly passes from the natural to the supernatural and to the testimony of the Word respecting the attributes and glory of God. While the heavens declare His glory and the earth His handiwork yet

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it is "the law of the Lord" that "is perfect converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple, the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

This Book is the mirror of God. On every page we behold His glorious face. In Genesis we see Him before there was anything else to see, the supreme and solitary Being who was before all things. And then we see the teeming universe spring from His mighty creating hand and sustained by His almighty providence. The fall of man wrecks His beneficent plan but God is still there equal to the occasion with His wonderful resources of redemption. The story unfolds and each page shines with the presence of God. The brightest character of the ante-deluvian world, holy Enoch, is distinguished simply by the fact that he

walked with God, and it is more than Enoch we see. Abraham is but a little child stepping out into the unknown holding the hand of God. Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, all represent the peculiar presence and personality of the infinite and ever-present God. The whole story of the Old Testament is a constant revelation of God amid all the changing scenes and overruling all the elements and forces of evil as well as good. The New Testament brings to us the vision of God in the face of Jesus Christ and leaves us with the Holy Ghost as the perpetual Presence of God in the inmost heart and life of every believer.

But the God of the Bible is more than this. To the believing soul He is not only God but our God. This Book is more than a mirror. It is a love letter with your name inscribed upon it, a bankbook by which you draw from your great deposit all that it promises. The only way to make the Bible interesting is to learn to read it with your own name in it, and

to see in every promise a direct message for you. Would you meet God every day? Go to this precious Book for a personal word morning by morning and evening by evening and you will learn to prize it, to mark it as the memorial of life's crisis hours and the history of your own experience.

3. We may find God in His providences; in the things that come to us day by day. Faith learns to recognize God in everything in some sense, even the things that come from the adversary and the hostile world. Every difficulty that meets us is but a challenge to prove the resources of our heavenly Father; but a vessel to hold some part of His usefulness; but an occasion to prove that there is nothing too hard for Him, nothing too great for Him to undertake, nothing too little for Him to care about. Thus we find God not only in our blessings as we call them, and the obvious tokens and gifts of His goodness, but in those things which are blessings in disguise, the trials,

the sorrows, the obstacles, the adverse circumstances, the very temptations and conflicts that are pressed upon us by our relentless foe, the devil. It is possible to learn to look upon all these things as but tests that come to us from our Father's hand, and opportunities of proving His love and power to help us; and (if we so receive them, it will come to pass that the most delightful remembrances of our lives will be the things that were most trying, because they shall have been transformed into blessings and triumphs. We shall learn to look over the head of the devil and see God above and beyond him, and by and by we shall be able even to recognize him in a sense our ally, as God takes our very enemy prisoner and makes him fight our battles and help to carry our burdens. This is the devil's greatest humiliation and the Lord's greatest glory.

There is a story told of an old lady who was praying for bread in a time of deep distress. Some rude boys heard her pray-

er, and thinking they would fool her they brought a loaf of bread and ringing her doorbell they slipped away and left it there. The old lady got the loaf of bread and immediately got down on her knees and thanked God for answering her prayer. This was too much for the boys and so they broke in on her and told her that she was only fooling herself for God had not sent the bread at all but they had just brought it. "Ah," she said, "boys, I know better. It was the Lord that sent it even if it was the devil that brought it." There are many things which the devil brings, but the child of God can see that God sent them.

Beloved, we greatly miss the discipline of life and the victories of faith if we do not watch for God in all the hard places that come to us day by day, and learn to rise from these to our sublimest victories, to take the stones of stumbling which the devil puts in our way or throws at us and build a tower with them which shall reach to heaven. If you want to

meet God this week you will find a hundred places waiting you where you can either surrender to the difficulty or trust your Father for victory and go forward with thankfulness and praise.

4. We can find God in His people. For the Church of Christ is His body and represents the very features of the glorious Head. It is "with all saints" that we learn to "know the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of Christ." It is a divine art to learn to recognize the Master's face in the faces of His children and the Master's presence in the common things of every day.

It is said a distinguished artist once was employed to paint the likeness of an empress. She was far from beautiful and yet he was expected to make a beautiful portrait. He visited all parts of the empire and took the portraits of all the beautiful women in the different cities, and out of these lovely portraits he made a composite picture representing all that was most striking and beautiful in each

of them, and then, by an exquisite touch of art, he put into this composite picture the expression of the countenance of the empress, that subtle and peculiar something which belongs to a face which represents its personality. It was the countenance of the empress, but they were the features of all the princesses of the land.

In a far higher sense the people of God are the images of the Master, and if we have both His faith and love we shall be able to find Him in His humblest disciples. Often have we when weary with service, and even baffled at the throne of grace in finding the very thing we needed, gone forth to visit some sick and suffering child and found at that bedside the Christ we had been looking for, and met in some simple expression, some incident, some word of message, some marvelous example of patient suffering or victorious faith the very thing we needed. We have met God. We have received the messenger wanted. We have got more than we gave and we have gone forth deep-

ly realizing that we have been with Jesus and that we have seen the Lord.

We can meet God in the ordinances of His house, in the worship of the sanctuary, in the broken bread and memorial wine, in the anointing service and baptismal flood, in the hour of united prayer at the altar of public consecration and in the ministries and services of His own house. There is a peculiar sense in which His promise is true, "Where two or three are gathered in My name there am I in the midst." Do not let us make the mistake of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together or lightly esteeming the sanctuary and its services, for while God is present in the hearts and homes of His people yet He loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Israel.

6. We can meet God in the secret place of the holy heart and the inner vision of the waiting spirit. This is God's favorite temple. While heaven is His throne and earth His footstool, His chosen sanctuary is the humble and contrite heart where

He loves to come "to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God is always waiting to meet the devout spirit in the inner chamber of the soul when we come by the new and living Way in the name of Jesus.

But there are some things that we must remember and do if we would really meet God in the secret place of the soul.

I. We must have the open face. "With open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." Many things may intercept the vision. Sitting before that camera the velvet cloth that covers the lens must be removed before the impressions can be taken. You must look with open face into the instrument. This only represents many things which may hinder our vision of God. One of them is the love of the world. The heart that is intensely fixed on earthly pleasure and worldly delights is incapable of seeing God.

Yonder mighty telescope at the Lick

Observatory had to be planted five thousand feet above the sea to lift it out of the mists of the lower air and bring it into the unobstructed vision of the heavenly worlds. Down on the plains of Sodom, Lot had no vision of God, but on the heights of Bethel, Abraham with nothing on earth but God to care for, received the covenant promise and the heavenly vision.

Again, the cares of the world, the anxieties of life are just as powerful to hinder the vision of God. There are many reading these lines who are so worried and distracted by a thousand earthly perplexities and troubles that their hearts are not at leisure to fix their eyes upon Jesus and behold the vision of His love. One look at Him, one sight of His almighty care would take away all your anxieties and give you the peace of God that passeth all understanding. Oh, look up from your cares with open face and hear Him say, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He will sustain thee."

Again, the fault may be some grosser sin, a heart steeped in earthly passion and unholy thought, imaginations, desires, purposes full of hatred, full of envy, full of bitterness or full of impure desire, can never see God. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

2. We need not only the open face but the open ear, for God wants to speak to us and He will not speak unless we are willing to listen. And so we find old Habakkuk saying, "I will get me on my tower and listen to what He shall say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd." He was ready to hear and therefore God had something to say. He expected that he might be reprov'd, but, lo, instead he received messages of promise that became the keynotes of faith to the Church of God for all the coming ages. God will speak to us if we will hearken and He will always speak some word of love.

3. We need the open heart for He has said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear My voice and open the door I will come into him and will sup with him and he with Me." God is waiting not only to speak to us but to sit down with us to feast with us, to bring His heavenly banquet for our supply and taste of our poor gifts and sup with us as well as have us sup with Him. But we must open the door. The heart must be yielded. The affections must be opened without reservation to the inmost depths of our being.

4. We must have the obedient and responsive will. "Whereupon," says the apostle, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." God comes not only to tell us things but to have us do them. His visitation and messages are for a practical purpose and He expects a practical response. Have we already obeyed what we know? Are we willing if He should meet us this day to gladly respond and say, "Lord, I will go ; speak, Lord, for

Thy servant heareth"? He came to little Samuel of old because He knew that Samuel would obey Him. He will come to you if He can find an open face, an open ear, an open heart and an obedient will.

Finally, God shows us the vision of His grace and glory that we may take all He shows us and claim all He reveals. "All the land that thou seest," He said to Abraham, "will I give thee." "God hath given us the Spirit," the apostle adds as an echo of the same truth "that we may know the things that are freely given us of God." We know them first by the revelation of the Spirit and then we take them by the appropriating act of faith. So He is waiting to-day to show us the vision of His infinite grace and power and then to give us all He shows us. Lift up your eyes, beloved, and look far and wide and long and steadily. Take it all in for all that you can see God will give you. Look out upon the hard places of your life and behold Him waiting to transform them into victories. Take in the whole

circumference of His resources and promises and then say, "All is mine." It is as if a father should take his favorite child through some beautiful place and ask her to inspect and admire its treasures of taste and beauty and after she had feasted her eyes upon it and expressed her admiration of its loveliness he should hand her the key and say, "My darling child, all this is yours." And so He is saying to us, "All that thou seest to thee will I give it." Let us look, let us take, and then let us use the fulness and the blessing all for Him, and for those to whom He has made us witnesses and trustees of His grace and blessing.

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